

Billion Dollar Revelry By Night In Mid-Ocean

Most Remarkable Ball
of Its Kind in History
of Trans-Atlantic
Travel Brings
Forth Aggre-
gate of Wealth
That Would
Shame
Croesus.



MRS. O. H. P. BELMONT.

Men and women whose wealth combined would exceed the billion-dollar mark, danced the tango, exhibited a couple hundred thousand dollars' worth of newest Parisian creations in clothes and wore a cool million in jewels at a ball given on the Imperator on its last trip across the Atlantic.

These facts are obtained from a crank who figures statistics on every imaginable subject—including the number of hazel-nut tarts required to reach from a Dutch delicatessen to the moon.

This man got over in a corner of the lounging room off the rose ball room of the Imperator, and busily plying stub pencil on pad, figured with a few deft twists of eyebrows and said pencil that he saw a billion dollars wriggling, stooping and wringing itself into pretzel curves on the ball room floor before him.

Being but a poor chap himself, say, not worth more than ten millions—it was quite some occasion for him.

And this happened almost 421 years to the day from the October 12, 1492, that Christopher Columbus—otherwise Christ-carrying-dove, the literal translation of his name—"sailed the ocean blue" and discovered this America that has settled the group of Americans who danced light-heartedly on the Imperator, their mountain-high stacks of dollars.

Also this billion-dollar ball happened on the same ocean, but in a different path across its wide expanse, that had, a day or two previously, swallowed more than a hundred victims from the ill-fated Volturno.

This revelry by night was much the same sort of revelry that is reported as having occupied the attention of the first-class passengers on the night the Titanic went down. As with the last ball on the Titanic, great wealth was represented by the guests, and it was the last gathering on board before the steamship cleared port and the passengers separated to go to their town or county homes.

It is not without significance that of the more than a hundred persons who were lost in the Volturno disaster, two-thirds were immigrants going to the "free land" to seek their fortunes.

Leaving One Land of Oppression for Another.

Being foreigners—unskilled laborers—they were but leaving the suppression of tax-ridden empires on one side of the great sea for the land where they would have learned the suppression that is the inevitable result of a billion or more of wealth being controlled by a group of persons whose number is so limited that the first-class list of one steamship can contain the names of all.

To return to particulars of the ball—it was probably the most remarkable revelry by night ever held upon the high seas, and was the first ever held on the Imperator.

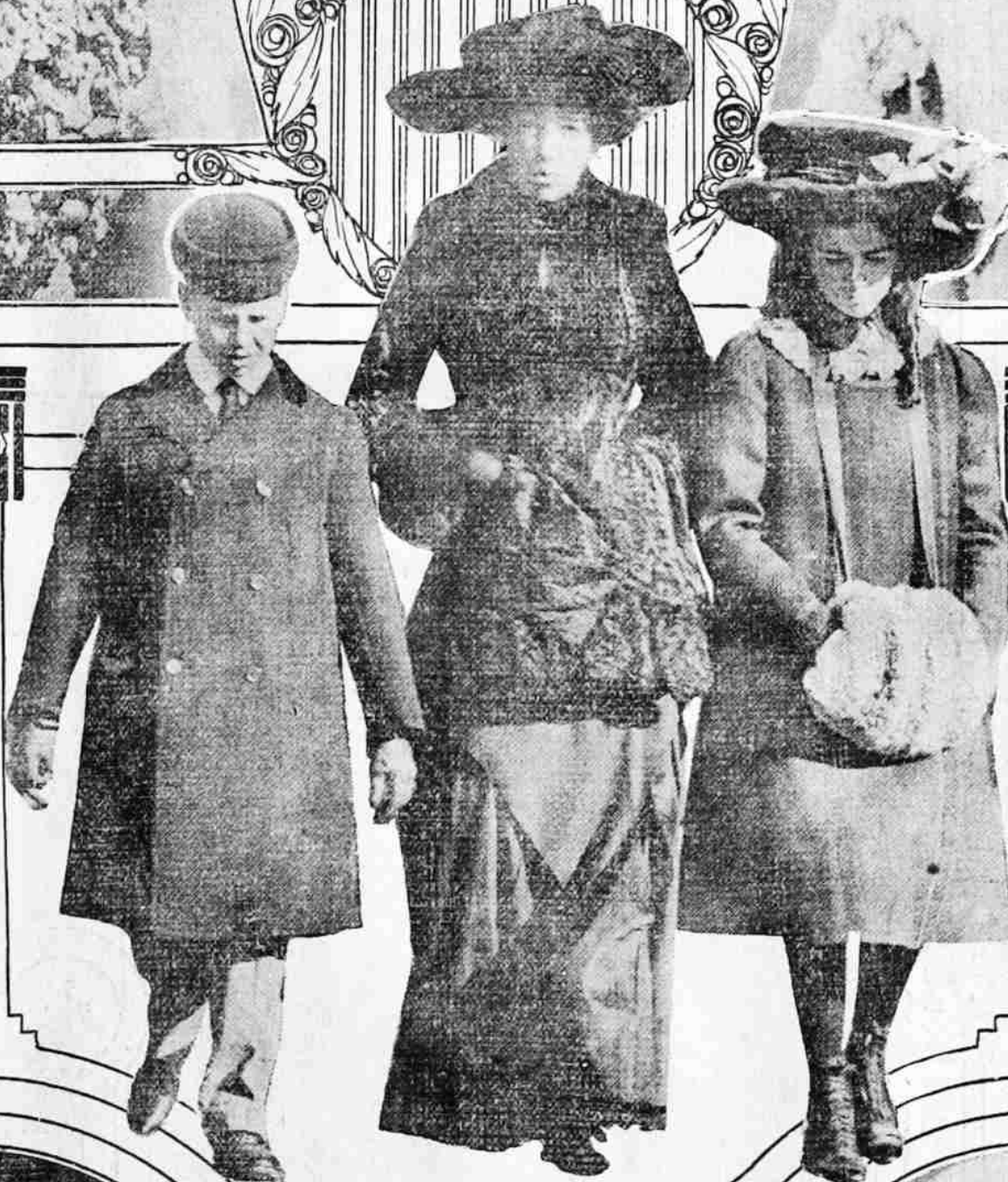
of the deep, the Imperator.

About 500 Americans, dancers and spectators, crowded the ship's ballroom for the final festivity before the arrival in New York.

The fortunes of this half thousand persons have been estimated as reaching the enormous total of \$1,000,000,000.

For look who traveled on the Imperator: Put Judge Elbert H. Gary and Mrs. Gary first. Judge Gary alone, the chairman of the Board of Directors of the United States Steel Corporation, has a personal fortune estimated at \$50,000,000. He has an interest in banks, railroads and industrial corporations, the aggregate capitalization of which is up in the billions.

Then we have Mr. and Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney and their pretty young daughter, Miss Flora Whitney. Whitney is understood to have inherited no less than \$40,000,000 from his father. One of his fel-



Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney and her children, John Hay and Flora.

And so was Harry S. Black, formerly the active head of the "Sky-scraper Trust." The United States Realty Company, of which he was president, owned the Hotel Plaza. According to reports, Black paid the lump sum of \$5,000,000 at the time of his divorce from the woman who later was married to Tyler Morse.

Jules S. Bache, a rich banker, returned on the Imperator. So did the lawyer, James Deering, for years the private counsel of Charles F. Murphy. So did John N. Willys of the Willys Overland Company; John H. McCollough, Francis Wellman, George M. Lauder, De Witt Talmage and many other men of wealth and note.

Not was all the money represented at the billion dollar ball in the hands of men. Mrs. Oliver H. P. Belmont was "among those present"—and her husband is supposed to have left her \$5,000,000. Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt was on the passenger list, too, and Miss Laura A. Braun of Chicago, admitted that she was at least \$200,000 richer than when she went abroad. She played baccarat wisely and well at Engleien, the resort near Paris.

So you see, it was really some party, and you can't blame the canny ones for getting into com-

total," as Mantellini would call it. And what is a billion dollar ball like? Really, the short and simple summary loved by the village newspaper fits this party, too—"a good time was had by all." The affair took place in the rose ballroom, a large and beautiful apartment just opposite the restaurant. It derives its name from the fact that carpet, chairs and sofas are all in the most glowing shade of rose-red. Costly



HARRY PAYNE WHITNEY.

MRS. WILLIAM B. LEEDS.

and all the light is let through the exquisitely modeled ceiling.

The decorations for the ball were simple, but effective. The big platform at the rear, reserved for the ship's orchestra, was banked deep in pale pink and lavender asters, with ferns and palms sprinkled among them. There really was no other space for flowers, as every inch of room was needed by the dancers and those who sat around the sides of the room and looked on.

Dancing began at 9 o'clock. Through Mrs. Degenhart, the social director of the Imperator, the Hamburg-American Company offered five beautiful prizes, one to the best dancer of the tango, two to the two couples who one-stopped most gracefully and two to the two best pairs of waltzers. The judges were Mrs. Degenhart and Maurice, the professional tango dancer, and his wife.

For about an hour there was general dancing on a floor as smooth as

observant eyewitness, every one of the wealthy and beautiful women present wore a slit skirt!

But though they tangoed briskly, they were most discreet and modest about it. No standards of propriety were set at defiance. And a little after 10 o'clock chairs and carpet changed the ballroom back to a concert room. After the concert proper came a final treat. On a little carpeted square in the center of the room Maurice and his wife showed the very, very latest tango steps as a brand new skating waltz which were applauded enthusiastically. Then he gave out the prizes to the fortunate terpsichoreans. And a little after 11 o'clock the billion dollar ball was over.

Oh, yes, though the ball was free to every first class passenger, they took up a subscription for the members of the crew. And the crew wouldn't mind having a billion dollar ball on every voyage.

British Channel Tunnel.

The project of tunneling the British Channel, so as to bring England and France into land communication with each other, is receiving just at this time such strong support in both countries that it may be fairly assumed that the work will actually be undertaken in the immediate future.

The London Chamber of Commerce has already given its formal approval to the project, and when the Associated Chambers of Commerce hold their annual meeting at Antwerp this month the delegates from London will urge international approval of the plan.

A deputation of members of Parliament waited upon the Premier a short time since and urged immediate action by the government toward official approval of the project. The Premier assured the committee that the government's indifference would have been given immediate consideration but for the fact that it was necessary to devote some further attention to the question whether the tunnel might be a source of military danger to the kingdom. That consideration has, however, almost entirely lost its weight of recent years.

The engineering and the financial ends of the project have been thoroughly canvassed and neither presents any difficulties. The estimate is that the tunnel will cost \$40,000,000 and will take ten years' time to complete. The estimated value of business which would pass through it would pay 4 per cent on this cost and leave a substantial margin over. No difficulties are anticipated in raising this amount, even should construction be undertaken as a purely commercial scheme and without government assistance from either side of the channel. It is believed that the tunnel would capture the larger share of the proposed business across the channel. The distance is but thirty miles, and were the tunnel through, the journey between London and Paris would be a matter of but five or six hours.